Research Problem Review 78-25

LEVEL II

AD A076657

DDC FILE COPY

STATE OF THE ART: OPFOR AND ARTEP IMPLEMENTATION IN THE US ARMY

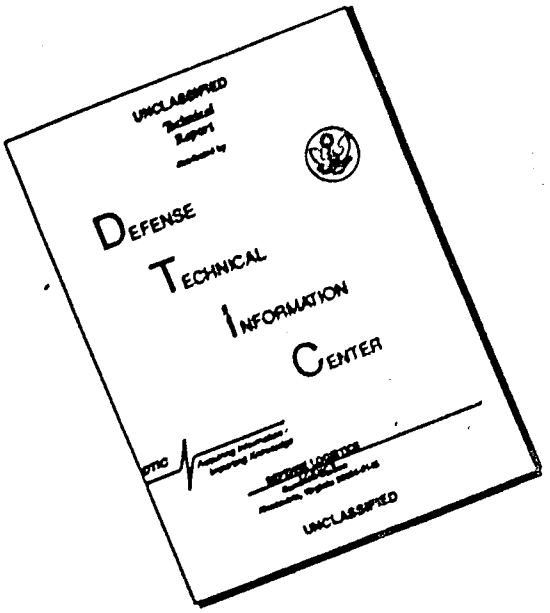
Norman D. Smith

ARI FIELD UNIT AT FORT HOOD, TEXAS

U. S. Army
Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences

November 1978

DISCLAIMER NOTICE



THIS DOCUMENT IS BEST QUALITY AVAILABLE. THE COPY FURNISHED TO DTIC CONTAINED A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF PAGES WHICH DO NOT REPRODUCE LEGIBLY.

U. S. ARMY RESEARCH INSTITUTE
FOR THE BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

A Field Operating Agency under the Jurisdiction of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel

JOSEPH ZEIDNER
Technical Director

WILLIAM L. HAUSER
Colonel, US Army
Commander

NOTICES

DISTRIBUTION Primary distribution of this report has been made by ARI. Please address correspondence concerning distribution of reports to: U. S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, ATTN: PERI-P, 5001 Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria, Virginia 22333

FINAL DISPOSITION This report may be destroyed when it is no longer needed. Please do not return it to the U. S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences.

NOTE The findings in this report are not to be construed as an official Department of the Army position, unless so designated by other authorized documents.

(16) Army Project Number
2Q763743A775

Human Performance
in Field Assessment

(14) ARI-RES PROBLEM REV-78-25

Research Problem Review 78-25

(6) STATE OF THE ART:
OPFOR AND ARTEP IMPLEMENTATION IN THE US ARMY

(10) Norman D. Smith

Submitted by:
George M. Gividen, Chief
ARI FIELD UNIT AT FORT HOOD, TEXAS

(12) 32

(11) Nov[redacted]978

Approved by:

A. H. Birnbaum, Acting Director
Organizations and Systems
Research Laboratory

Joseph Zeidner, Technical Director
U.S. Army Research Institute for the
Behavioral and Social Sciences

Research Problem Reviews are special reports to military management. They are usually prepared to meet requests for research results bearing on specific management problems. A limited distribution is made--primarily to the operating agencies directly involved.

408 010

FOREWORD

The Fort Hood Field Unit of the Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences conducts research and provides technical advisory service for a variety of Army organizations. FORSCOM's Opposing Force Training Detachment (Red Thrust) requested that the Army Research Institute develop Opposing Force (OPFOR) training objectives for incorporation into the Army Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP). The present research represents the first in a series of studies in response to that need. This report examines the ways in which the OPFOR concept and ARTEP have been implemented within the present military environment in which they must function. The results will be of use to all agencies concerned with training in today's Army.

This research was executed under Project Title: Human Performance in Field Assessment which is part of ARMY RDTE 2Q763743A775.

Joseph Zeidner
Technical Director

Accession For	
NTIS GRA&I	☒
DDC TAB	☐
Unannounced	☐
Justification	
By	
Distribution/	
Availability Codes	
Dist.	Avail and/or special
A	

STATE OF THE ART: OPFOR AND ARTEP IMPLEMENTATION IN THE US ARMY

BRIEF

Requirement:

This research was conducted in direct response to a request from the USA FORSCOM Opposing Force Training Detachment (Red Thrust) for the development of OPFOR training objectives for incorporation into the Army Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP).

Both the ARTEP and Opposing Forces (OPFOR) concept are relatively new and interrelated programs. As a result there was a need to first develop an understanding of how both concepts were being applied and utilized within the context of normal operations of combat arms units at battalion level and below. The problem was complicated by both the wide variety of OPFOR programs that were being used, and the many different types of existing and proposed ARTEPs.

The findings in this report directly relate to these issues and represent the first phase of a continuing research effort.

Procedure:

Data were acquired by use of in-depth interviews from units located at Ft. Bliss, Ft. Carson, Ft. Hood, Ft. Riley, and Panama.

Units were selected on as nearly a random basis as training schedules would permit from combat arms battalions. Infantry, mechanized infantry, and armored units have approximately equal representation. Sixty-nine officers and 37 NCO/EM comprised the total sample. Seventy-two percent of the officer sample of nearly equal numbers in battalion command, S-3, S-2, and company command positions were represented. The remainder or 28% of the officer sample came from positions at brigade, division, and corp. The NCO/EM were personnel who were serving in the OPFOR maneuver company at the time of deactivation in April, 1978, at Ft. Hood, Texas and had been reassigned to other units.

Principal Findings:

- Given the system, dictated by current doctrine and policy, within which the Army must operate, the average combat arms unit believes it is functioning at time commitment saturation levels. All feel that

a significant proportion of the time is allotted to activities not directed toward combat readiness preparation. Demands are so intense some higher level commanders are forced into making implausible assertions that (1) everything a soldier is tasked to do is training, and (2) combat readiness by definition includes all the tasks assigned to units to perform. Such reasoning helps to undermine training that is accomplished, affecting the ability of units to benefit from useful training devices like OPFOR and the ARTEP.

• Major concern for "passing" ARTEPs and looking good on exercises of various types, in part, explains the lack of enthusiasm for incorporation of the OPFOR concept into field training. Though bringing needed battlefield realism to the training scene, the OPFOR disrupts the even flow of scenarios presently used and thus generates anxiety among commanders who are convinced the ARTEP is a test; a poor showing on it will have a potentially adverse impact on their OER and career as an officer.

• The foregoing conditions precipitate a chain of events over which only limited control can be exercised by any one commander, except at the highest levels. The intended value of the ARTEP is immediately degraded. Overcommitment (of time) forces selection and training of evaluators/controllers to whenever and whoever is available, thus reducing the quality and validity of the evaluation. Rational career concern by many good commanders leads to a form of collusion among staffs in order to assure that a unit does not make mistakes on an ARTEP. Such deception seems endemic in the present system and crops up in a wide range of evaluations and status reports.

• Some modification in some of the factors may be possible. However, a simple prescription of large doses of OPFOR training taken liberally with an ARTEP, without adjustment in other components of the system, will not have the desired effect of improving preparation of men at the lower unit level to fight, let alone win the first battle.

Conclusion:

The OPFOR program, as now implemented, is achieving only a limited degree of success in meeting goals presented by the current AR 350-2. Although viewed by most units as a useful program, higher command emphasis is insufficient and OPFOR training is generally relegated to a relatively passive classroom role.

The ARTEP has been unsuccessful in accomplishing one of its major objectives: to create a training environment in which units can focus on the diagnostic components of performance in a relatively test-free environment. Consequences of this failure on the activity-intense Modern Army need careful examination.

STATE OF THE ART: OPFOR & ARTEP IMPLEMENTATION IN THE US ARMY

CONTENTS

STATE OF THE ART: OPFOR AND ARTEP IMPLEMENTATION IN THE US ARMY

INTRODUCTION

Study Objectives

The research contained in this report addresses four general areas:

- The Opposing Force (OPFOR) program and the state of the art of its implementation.
- An OPFOR maneuver company and its utilization.
- The OPFOR concept within the context of the Army Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP).
- The ARTEP and its implementation.

History

This study originated as a response by US Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences to a Human Resource Need (HRN) statement from USA FORSCOM Opposing Force Training Detachment (Red Thrust) entitled "Opposing Force (OPFOR) Training Objectives in ARTEPs."

Overall Research Objectives

This report addresses the first major objective which is to develop an extensive appreciation for two important and relatively new programs in training, the Opposing Force Program and the Army Training and Evaluation Program. At the same time it is necessary to understand the systems existing within the US Army today in which they must function.

The second major objective, using the results from Objective I, will set about the task of validating OPFOR training objectives for incorporation into all fundamental mission statements of applicable ARTEPs.

The third major objective will propose strategies for incorporating OPFOR training requirements into ARTEPs.

Approach

The method used for addressing the requirements of the first major objective will be described here in that the content of this report deals only with Objective I.

The in-depth interview was utilized throughout this portion of the study as the principal data collection instrument.

The military units in which data were collected included the 2nd Armored Division and the 1st Cavalry Division, Ft. Hood, Texas; the 1st Infantry Division, Ft. Riley, Kansas; the 4th Infantry Division, Ft. Carson, Colorado; the 3rd ACR, Ft. Bliss, Texas; and the 193rd Infantry Brigade, Panama. In addition, officers and EM once belonging to the now deactivated OPFOR company (B, 163rd MI Battalion) were included. Personnel were chosen in a manner which aimed at increasing the likelihood that they were representative not only of units to which they belonged, but also of units of a similar type. The bulk of the officer group held positions in key command and staff roles. Table 1 presents a breakdown of interviews by level and job.

Table 1
Interview Distribution

Structural Level	Command/Staff Position								
	CG	ADC	G2	G3	Cdr	S2	S3	OPFOR Cadre	NCO/EM
Corps								6	6
Division		1	6	2					
Brigade						2	2		
Battalion					12	13	14		
Company					12				31

Completing the list of interviewees were four officers and two civilians at TRADOC Combined Arms Test Activity (TCATA), Ft. Hood, Texas.

OVERVIEW OF OPFOR IMPLEMENTATION

Keying on the proposition that the Army must be ready to fight on short notice, Army combat arms training requires continual refinement and tuning in order to keep it abreast of modern technology and the political realities of a changing world. In response to this training need, it is necessary to create more relevance in training. In part, this has been brought about by rapid advances in battlefield systems and, in part, by the realization that we will not have the time after hostilities begin to only then start training to defeat the tactics of our adversary. Thus, we must take into consideration in our current training programs the weapons sytems and tactics of those nations that represent realistic potential threats to this country.

Moreover, the exposure to and understanding of the tactics of our potential enemies must be disseminated to the lowest levels of our military structure. A vehicle for achieving this was the aggressor force concept but the mechanics necessary to make it function were cumbersome. A new approach (direct identification of the USSR as one of the potential adversaries) and a new name (the Opposing Force Program [OPFOR]) gave hope for revitalizing interest in training itself. It was now possible to move a step closer to achieving both relevance and realism. At least at the concept level these changes looked promising.

To provide the information necessary to produce training materials about the Soviets a concerted effort was undertaken by the military intelligence community to declassify great quantities of information and formulate it into working documents for the Army at large to use. At the same time, the armed service headquarters were tasked with responsibility to set up channels for this information to be integrated into troop training. As a result of this new emphasis, FORSCOM organized an OPFOR training and information detachment, RED THRUST; and armies, corps, divisions, and independent brigades/regiments established various types of information centers to provide experts and trainers in Soviet military systems.

A variety of OPFOR training activities were implemented by different commands. Wide variation existed in the amount of emphasis placed on the OPFOR concept, and this quite naturally reflected itself in the quantity and quality of the training offered. For the most part, however, training was confined to classroom-type presentations. Examples of the methods used are illustrated lectures, multimedia presentations, multimedia in combination with class participation on tactical problems, foreign materials displays and briefings, and simulations utilizing terrain boards or maps. Each of these approaches had advantages but the multimedia type presentation developed by the Fort Hood Red Thrust Detachment was perhaps the most sophisticated. It was characterized by new dimensions of auditory and visual reality. The Red Thrust presentation eliminates much of the passivity of a standard classroom setting and shows promise of adding significantly to training methodologies.

Efforts at integration of OPFOR into the maneuver aspects of tactical training have been decidedly more limited. Several units constructed a representation of a Soviet strong point to give US troops experience in attacking a prepared position. On occasion US units were designated as OPFOR units for a specific exercise; as an example, a company sized force was used by the 1st Infantry Division in an exercise in 1977 at Fort Irwin. When US units were maneuvering against one another, some aspects of Soviet tactics such as the use of smoke and chemicals, force ratios, and EW were added, when practicable.

The creation at Fort Hood in the summer of 1976 of a dedicated OPFOR company represented a concerted effort to give a US unit the on going mission of functioning as a Soviet motorized rifle company. It was a direct response by one commander to the acknowledged need for better preparation to deal with the potential threat posed by the Soviet Union. General R. M. Shoemaker, Commander, FORSCOM, (then Lieutenant General and Commander of III Corps, Fort Hood, Texas) had not only the insight but also the courage to make a pioneering commitment of assets which were available in his command to form a unit whose sole responsibility was to function as a reinforced Soviet motorized rifle company. Its primary mission was to provide a realistic maneuver unit against which US units could test their own readiness to contend with this potential adversary.

ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION OF A DEDICATED OPFOR UNIT

From this brief overview it is clear that a wide range of actions have been taken in response to the requirement to include the OPFOR

concept as a fundamental component of training.[1] The OPFOR company at Fort Hood was somewhat unique in that it had the full time mission of supporting training for all units at Fort Hood desiring to use it. Furthermore, it survived long enough (approximately 1-3/4 years) to produce measurable effects and provide a source of information well worth exploring. For the purpose of this analysis it is useful to present, first, a basic description of the organization and functions of the unit, and second, a discussion of its use as a training vehicle.

Organization

The unit designated to assume the mission of an OPFOR company was a military intelligence (MI) ground surveillance radar unit. This unit was chosen because its military intelligence mission was seldom exercised in the existing peacetime setting. The MOSs of this MI unit were not, for the most part, those normally found in combat arms units. A more appropriate balance was later achieved by assigning combat arms personnel to the unit as the MI personnel left the unit through normal attrition.

The strength of the unit ranged between 100 and 130 but those having combat arms MOSs never exceeded 40% of the total. At the outset, all men were involuntarily assigned duty with the OPFOR unit; later, after its reputation became better known among units it had opposed during tactical training exercises, men volunteered when openings became available.

Some of the OPFOR units' equipment was part of the TOE of the ground surveillance radar unit (administration vehicles and six diesel

[1]Opposing Force (OPFOR) Program, Army Regulation No. 350-2, October, 1976. Revised August 15, 1978.

M-113s). The remainder (5 gasoline M-113s, APCs, and 5 gasoline M-48A1 tanks) were borrowed from the Texas National Guard's 49th Armored Division that stored its equipment at Fort Hood. To produce more realism, minor modifications were made on two 5/4 ton trucks to give them the appearance of Soviet BRDMs, on M-113s to give a silhouette of BMPs, and on the M-48A1 tanks to look like the Soviet T-62 tanks.

Concurrently in 1976, the MI Battalion, of which the ground surveillance radar unit was a part, was able to procure a quantity of Foreign Materials for Training (FMT) from Aberdeen Proving Ground. To supplement the maneuver unit's training capability, various pieces of this equipment were used for static display and briefing purposes. The FMT included three tanks (T-54, T-54A, and T-62), one APC (OT-62 Czech produced), one APC (BTR-60), a Soviet jeep (UAZ-69), and a ZPU-4 antiaircraft gun.

However, later in 1977, this foreign equipment was also used in field training exercises. To stay within FORSCOM Directives not to maneuver the foreign equipment, transporters hauled it to the field as close as possible to the defensive position it would occupy prior to the beginning of the exercise. As the defending OPFOR company withdrew under enemy pressure, the piece of foreign equipment would remain in position to symbolize the attrition of enemy forces. Realism was enhanced when the attacking force recognized the equipment as foreign rather than US. It was hypothesized that viewing the foreign vehicles in the field training environment would have more impact than a static display briefing at the motor pool.

Integration of the foreign equipment display in the field environment also offered the opportunity to "plant" P.O.W.s who were actually carrying Soviet weapons and documents written in Russian. Intelligence play and the credibility of the capture was enhanced by the proximity of the foreign equipment and weapons and the fact that the captives were dressed in a Soviet style uniform and communicating in the Russian language. In addition, several types of Communist bloc nation small caliber weapons were in the possession of the OPFOR unit, e.g., AK47s, PKs, RPDs, the 1891 sniper rifle, 82mm mortar, and the RPG2 and 7. In the case of the AK47 assault rifle, conventional US units were provided the opportunity to become acquainted with and fire the weapon utilizing instructions and weapons provided by the OPFOR company.

Obviously, parts and maintenance were a constant problem with the FMT, hence their employment in relatively static roles. However, maintenance and spare parts for some of the US equipment were also difficult to acquire. Initially, almost all personnel were unfamiliar with repair requirements. The M48A1 tanks on loan from the Texas National Guard were no longer a part of the regular Army inventory and a prescribed load list (PLL) was not in effect; hence, parts could be more readily procured from the National Guard for immediate training needs than through normal channels. The M48A1, a gasoline fueled tank, also created other problems. It consumed three to five times as much fuel as more modern diesel tanks and often confusion arose when delivering fuel in that most supply points found it difficult

to understand the need for gasoline since all tanks now in the active army inventory are diesel.

Training and preparation were constant. Having been given the mission to perform tactically as a Soviet motorized rifle company, a wide range of new learning was mandatory, including: creation of a tactical Russian language; proper wearing of uniforms; recognition of insignia and rank; basic drill; offensive and defensive tactics; weapons systems capabilities; and life style of the Soviet soldier. For many of the US soldiers it meant learning combat arms skills not ordinarily a regular part of their primary MOS. Frequent field operations required longer hours in the motor pool readying vehicles for the next exercise. In spite of this greater demand on the troops, with few exceptions, the men did not object because the job was interesting and challenging. But, most important, these soldiers had a meaningful mission which made sense to them--helping to train US units for combat.[2]

Employment of OPFOR Unit as a Training Vehicle

Working within the constraints imposed by the already discussed MOS/TOE mismatch, old equipment, and maintenance difficulties, the OPFOR unit was able, by October 1976, four months after inception, to maneuver effectively in the first of two exercises at Fort Irwin, California.

The OPFOR unit performed well in both of the field training exercises at Fort Irwin (October-December 76 and April-May 77) as attested to by after action reports and surveys of participants.[3] Moreover,

[2]Interviews with former members of OPFOR Company, 1978.

[3]Evaluation of OPFOR at Fort Irwin, October-December 1976, G2, OPFOR Cadre, June, 1977.

these reports and comments strongly documented the fact that the US units facing the OPFOR unit developed a new knowledge of and respect for the Soviet units and tactics. Furthermore, the encounters with OPFOR units provided immediate feedback regarding the best (and sometimes worst) possible employment of their own US weapons systems, tactics and doctrine.

At Fort Irwin the OPFOR unit was permitted to move freely within the tactical environment as it simulated the actions of a Soviet motorized rifle company. The situation was ideal for both training and evaluation, with both troops and commanders being critiqued immediately after each exercise. The exercises were then repeated as a learning vehicle until required performance was attained. The commander of the OPFOR unit stated in his after action report, February, 1977:[4]

> As follow-on iterations and detailed critiques were conducted . . . platoons learned to cope with massive odds, understand the type of tactics that would be employed against them and were able to fight a piece of ground effectively without radio communications and under heavy CBR concentrations.

The use of OPFOR units in this exercise graphically illustrated to the individual crew members what would be expected of them on the modern battlefield. The commander of the OPFOR unit stated that the individual soldier had learned to "associate the sight of the approaching OPFOR company with five distinct experiences: fast offensive action, large numbers of vehicles, extensive EW activites, heavy employment of smoke, and finally an almost certain employment of chemical agents."[5]

---

[4]After action report on Fort Irwin Exercise, October-November 1976, 2d Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, February, 1977, p. 70.

[5]Ibid, February 1977, p. 71.

The exercises at Fort Irwin, not unlike most field exercises, were conducted within the framework of an appropriate Army Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP).[6] The ARTEP defines broadly the conditions of the exercise relevant to the missions of the unit being evaluated. When a battalion ARTEP is being conducted, however, it is a matter of record that much of the exercise falls into the category of staff actions at brigade and battalion levels. Consequently, it is these staffs that work the hardest and perhaps benefit most from battalion ARTEPs. The benefits of battalion ARTEPs accruing to personnel at company level and below are very few. The training and practice so badly needed at company level and below are seriously diminished or lacking entirely in conventional battalion ARTEPs.

An observation from the OPFOR commander's report is interesting because it clearly raises questions about how to properly employ the OPFOR of company size in a battalion ARTEP which does not take advantage of a multi-level evaluation. He says:[7]

> During battalion level training, the OPFOR company was employed against the flanks and individual battle positions in an effort to maintain proper force ratios. Force ratios were achieved; however, the training effectiveness during platoon training was greater, simply because the situation was an individual crew problem and soldiers experienced a closer responsibility.

---

[6]While the ARTEP is correctly understood as an ongoing process, common usage has narrowed the meaning to refer to the major functional part of the ARTEP, the external evaluation. In at least one post (Ft. Carson) this distinction is made and EXTEV appears on training schedules rather than the more commonly observed term, ARTEP. For the purposes of communication the more commonly used, though perhaps less precise, term, ARTEP, will be employed when referring to the external evaluation.

[7]Ibid.

In other words, when an ARTEP scenario is prepared which identifies the OPFOR as the only attacking force, the OPFOR can behave as a Soviet unit would. However, when the OPFOR company is appended to a battalion which may be called, for exercise purposes, the OPFOR, but has no intention of maneuvering as an OPFOR, major problems arise. The most obvious is the incompatibility of Soviet and US tactics, expecially in offensive operations. Another problem results from the carefully controlled ARTEP scenario in which the impact of Soviet-like offensive tactics is totally ignored.

In summary:

- An OPFOR unit was established and trained to perform its mission as a reinforced Soviet motorized rifle company.

- In field exercises at Fort Irwin, it performed its mission in a superior manner.

- Using an OPFOR unit to simulate the enemy improves the training of conventional units so long as the OPFOR unit is employed in its mission role; however, its effectiveness and usefulness are diminished considerably when employed otherwise.

INTERFACE OF OPFOR PROGRAM WITH THE ARTEP

During the initial utilization of the OPFOR unit at Fort Irwin two primary problems emerged. The first concerned how to effectively incorporate the OPFOR concept within the ARTEP scenario. The second problem was more pervasive and less well defined; it is the firmly entrenched belief that the ARTEP is not just an evaluation/training program, but

a test of the battalion and its commander, the outcome of which may weigh heavily on the officer's efficiency report and on his future as an officer.

The post-Ft. Irwin misuse of the OPFOR unit is a good example of how the concern about the impact of the ARTEP on the commander affects training. While the edges of the issue were visible at Fort Irwin, a much clearer picture developed at Fort Hood after the outstanding job done by the OPFOR unit at Fort Irwin. Of the 22 exercises and ARTEPs in which the OPFOR company participated at Fort Hood, the company was permitted to be correctly employed as a Soviet company on only two occasions.[8] Some members of the OPFOR unit stated that the excellent type of training that they could have provided to the US units was negated because brigade and battalion commanders did not want their units to be faced with the results of a confrontation against OPFOR tactics and OPFOR organization--namely defeat.[9]

But why would defeat in a training exercise be so unsettling? Because a defeat implies to some that the battalion is not properly trained. More than this, it implies that the battalion commander is not a good leader, which logically produces the inference that the officer would get a low Officer Evaluation Report (OER).

Why, if the ARTEP is a training and diagnostic program, should the impact be so strongly felt? If the ARTEP were diagnostic; if time were provided to replay portions of the exercise until units were

---

[8]Discussions with the former OPFOR company commander, Captain Kenneth L. Allred, 1978.

[9]Discussions with former members of the OPFOR unit, 1978.

able to deal with the OPFOR as usually done at Fort Irwin; if the ARTEP were not regarded by most commanders as a critical test of their ability, and finally, if the methods of disciminating among battalion commanders on the OER were not heavily dependent on subjective assessments of their raters and endorsers, then the impact would not be so great. However, by the very nature of the conditions surrounding the ARTEP, the requirement to turn in an outstanding performance looms very large in the thinking of most battalion commanders and their staffs.

It is within this arena that the OPFOR unit at Fort Hood had to operate, and thus it found itself in a dilemma. When the OPFOR unit performed well as a competitive, uncooperative, opposing force, and "defeated" the conventional unit which it confronted in an ARTEP, it became a threat to the conventional unit commander who feared the "defeat" would degrade his next OER. If it didn't perform well, it became vulnerable to the accusation that it was not a cost effective training approach. In either case the ultimate consequence was the effective loss of the unit.

The OPFOR Company in the Battalion ARTEP

Two examples will serve to underscore the difficulties encountered by US commanders in trying to contend with the OPFOR concept in an ARTEP. The first involved a battalion ARTEP in which one battalion, designated the "OPFOR" was to attack another battalion which was being evaluated. In this exercise the common practice was employed of simply renaming a unit "OPFOR" but expecting it to maneuver as a US unit. In this case, however, the dedicated OPFOR company was

also assigned to the "OPFOR" battalion to give it realism. The mission given to the OPFOR company by the battalion commander was to remain on the flank of the battalion, participate in a coordinated attack and maneuver, not as a Soviet unit, but as a US unit would--even though the scenario called for the OPFOR company to represent a Soviet trained force. To complicate matters even more, the expectation of the controller of the exercise was that the OPFOR company would maneuver as a Soviet unit would. Also the "OPFOR" battalion was to attack, not employing Soviet tactics, but in the more methodical US manner of traveling and bounding overwatch. The dedicated OPFOR company, however, proceeded to maneuver as a Soviet unit in accordance with the directions given by the controller of the exercise; it flanked the "enemy" and aggressively moved on to the objective while the entire "OPFOR" battalion using US tactics was still held up by resistance from the US battalion.

The rapid acquisition of a primary intermediate objective by the OPFOR unit had the effect of disrupting the total battalion exercise and complicating the evaluation of the battalion undergoing the ARTEP. This event highlights several important considerations when working with the OPFOR training concept.

First, little or no training gain occurs by simply designating a unit OPFOR but not tasking it with the mission of maneuvering as a Soviet unit. A double loss occurs in that neither unit, "OPFOR" nor US, gain from the experience.

Second, if a company sized unit is capable of performing an OPFOR mission it cannot usefully be attached to a larger unit which

does not have a similar mission; for optimum value the company sized OPFOR unit must maneuver independently against units smaller than a company to be effective as a trainer.

The OPFOR in the Division Restructuring Study

A second example focuses on the complexity of utilization and integration of OPFOR in test exercises. In attempting to make use of the dedicated OPFOR company and its expertise in Phase I of the Division Restructuring Study (DRS), full advantage could not be taken of its capability because it became obvious that the characteristics of battlefield obscuration, i.e., smoke, speed, maneuver, and EW found in Soviet tactics complicate measurement problems during these tests.

Phase II of the DRS promises possibly even less in the way of real testing of US restructured units against forces configured and maneuvering as the Soviets would. The resistance to use of OPFOR, even when critical tests such as DRS are being conducted, is not easy to understand. However, it may be explained, in part, by two often heard statements which expose fundamental beliefs held by many in the Army.

The first arises from the general notion that anything our country has produced is biggest, best, and unsurpassed. It follows that if the US Army can only be left alone to learn the tactics it has, this knowledge is all that is necessary to defeat any potential enemy. The obverse of this position is the second belief; training in Soviet maneuver tactics takes away scarce training time for learning our own tactics. These beliefs apparently overwhelm the fact that training against an OPFOR not only increases skills in our own tactics

but more important, brings about understanding of how to modify our tactics or organization to more efficiently defeat a potential enemy.

In effect, we are evaluating the effectiveness of US units against inappropriate non-existent "enemies" using unrealistic tactics that do not resemble in any real way the organizations or tactics or equipment of our potential enemies. The US Army is training its soldiers to fight against a non-existent enemy--when we should and could be training them to fight against our potential enemies. To reverse this trend our ARTEPs must be modified to include OPFOR considerations.

THE BASIC PROBLEM--THE ARTEP

We have reviewed the origins of OPFOR and its implementation and have taken a close look at a dedicated OPFOR unit for the purpose of determining how well OPFOR has served as a training vehicle.

In the process it became apparent that the OPFOR concept (in its most active sense, the maneuver unit) crystalized one of the major problems with its use--the ARTEP.

Understandably, brigade and division commanders wish to see their battalions do well on ARTEPs, and more often than not, they personally witness the performance from various vantage points. Clearly, such attention points to a high degree of vested interest at all levels in the outcome. In most instances, however, it is assumed that a conscious effort is made to be objective. When choosing words and phrases to convey their assessment of the battalion commander on his Officer Evaluation Report (OER), brigade and division commanders

strive not to be overly influenced by their positive or negative impressions of a battalion's performance on one of the most expensive (estimates range from $50,000 to $150,000 for each battalion) and visible training exercises during a commander's tour.

Further supporting the belief that objectivity is possible is the extensive reporting procedure required of the controllers/evaluators to the brigade/division commander after the ARTEP. These reports provide another aid to the commander in his formation of an overall impression of a unit's performance. However, the objectivity of the system shows some weakness at this point. The key issue lies with the selection and training of the evaluators/controllers.[10] It is desirable that these personnel come from units having no direct knowledge of the unit being evaluated, that evaluators have the same or similar job experience, e.g., tankers should evaluate tankers, not mechanized infantry, and that all should be given at least two days training before the ARTEP. Notwithstanding the foregoing considerations, given the overwhelming number of non-training oriented requirements prescribed for units by higher headquarters, it is a fact of life that evaluators/controllers are usually selected from the same brigade (sometimes from a sister brigade, and in rare instances from another division or from a school such as the Command and General Staff College), may frequently be mismatched on knowledge of the unit they are evaluating, and spend too little time in training for the evaluation.

---

[10]Havron, Albert, McCullough & Wanschura. Improved Army Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP) Methods for Unit Evaluation. Technical Report Vol I, U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral Sciences, 5001 Eisenhower Ave, Alexandria, VA, January, 1978, p. 21.

In addition, the magnitude of the task of evaluating a battalion ARTEP consumes the services of most of the officers and a hundred or more EM of another battalion.

From a purely scientific perspective it would be difficult to maintain that an unclouded measure of a unit could emerge from the latter, yet more typical circumstances. However, from another perspective, the circumstances surrounding the usual ARTEP might be rationalized as the best outcome possible given the system as it now operates. On the positive side it appears reasonable to conclude that were it not for the requirement to conduct the ARTEP, higher command non-training demands would intrude more often, and even less time would be devoted to combat readiness training. Following this line of thought a bit further, it seems both efficient and reasonable that personnel within the same brigade as the evaluated battalion would be better able to serve as battalion ARTEP evaluators since the battalions of different brigades show considerable variation in their character. Circumstances which can produce such differences range all the way from leadership style and management to historical/traditional values inherent in the units. Given that these variations can probably be demonstrated, it is felt by some that only evaluators from the same brigade can adequately judge the performance of those units because only they can better take into account the special problems that exist in a particular battalion when it is engaged in an ARTEP.

By this time it is apparent that the principal motivation behind the ARTEP has been undermined. It is self-evident that among these

evaluators/controllers there is a shared awareness that their own careers may be affected by the outcome of the ARTEP--for many know that the time will come when their unit will also be evaluated in an ARTEP, possibly by the very officers whose unit they are now grading. With these personnel, as with the brigade and division commanders, hopefully an effort is made to counter the forces that act upon their observations in order to give objective assessments. Nevertheless, although most know what standards a unit must reach to be ready for combat, all know the requirements for high OER ratings and resultant "success" as an officer.

Overwhelming evidence exists from the units contacted for the belief that the battalion commander's score on his OER will be influenced by his unit's performance on the ARTEP.[11] In some units, the division commanders have articulated often and with great authority their commitment to the policy that ARTEPs are to be used only for training and overall unit evaluation purposes. The fact remains, however, that the brigade commander--as well as the division commander--will probably be present, at least part of the time, while the ARTEP is underway and the memory of what transpires cannot easily be eradicated. Comparisons, spoken or otherwise, with the performance of other units eventually will occur. When the OER is written, it cannot help but be colored by memories of an outstanding or poorly executed ARTEP.

The ARTEP is usually a one-time event during any given commander's assignment. It is composed of a number of missions and supplemental

---

[11] Interviews with battalion commanders, 1978.

missions that must be accomplished in a short period of time (usually 3 to 5 days) often leaving little or no opportunity to plan for repetition of tasks unsatisfactorily performed. Hence, at least two components of a standard learning situation are absent, i.e., immediate feedback and repetition to achieve a predetermined performance criterion.

In view of the absence from the ARTEP of an opportunity to critique a unit's performance and then replay immediately the mission/supplemental mission correcting deficiencies, the ARTEP inevitably takes on more of the appearance of a test than a training/learning experience.

Another major consideration, when examining the perceived importance of the ARTEP, was the unanimous opinion of surveyed battalion commanders that they have far too little time to train. Moreover, even though training time is scheduled, it is not uncommon for a unit to have fewer than half its personnel available to train; other duties placed on that unit from higher echelons constantly siphon off personnel to fulfill their needs.

The effect of reduced time for training is to increase the awareness of the commander that he must concentrate what training time he does have on those elements of the ARTEP most likely to be presented to his unit for execution if he is to "pass" the ARTEP.

In order to know as much as possible about these expectations, a commander will expect his staff to learn, in advance, all they can about the ARTEP to enable him to focus during training time only on those activities likely to be required during the ARTEP. However,

in theory this should not be necessary. The brigade or division commander, whoever exerts the greatest influence on the ARTEP's composition, should be aware of the general weaknesses in his units, the specificity perhaps increasing as one goes down the chain of command. In addition, these commanders should be informed on the training taking place in smaller units which is aimed at eradication of deficiencies, and the ARTEPs thus designed as a method of evaluating the successes resulting from the training. Such a process will encourage an openness in the system whereby training-to-correct deficiencies can function effectively. Since this channel of information both up the chain of command, battalion commander to brigade to division, and down, is often cluttered with reality related anxieties, such collateral processes of information acquisition are not only useful but absolutely necessary for survival.

While one useful purpose is served if a battalion can have forewarning about an ARTEP, i.e., the unit can rehearse the missions and look good on them, a disservice is also done to any reasonable estimates of the unit's ability to manage itself when faced with unexpected events. Though the ARTEP is not meant to provide a sole indicator of combat readiness, it does (should) provide significant information. Serious questions can be raised about the validity of that information if the ARTEP is simply a staged event. However, it tends to lean in the direction of a staged event because, as discussed earlier, the ARTEP is regarded as a test that must be passed to enable the battalion commander to survive in the promotional system. But what of the

principal focus of the ARTEP, to aid in training and unit evaluation in order to increase the combat readiness of the unit? It is diluted or lost in the conflict faced by many commanders (as well as a host of others in the military)--either do what is necessary to survive in the promotion scramble, today's reality, or prepare a unit for combat, a reality which may not develop, at least not until the commander has been promoted or has retired--the "hold your breath and pray" syndrome.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

This research paper dealt with (1) a brief overview of the implementation of the OPFOR concept and its application in units, (2) the OPFOR maneuver unit and its utilization, (3) the OPFOR concept within the context of training/evaluation in the form of the ARTEP and finally, (4) the nature of the ARTEP itself.

A number of other interesting issues have emerged but no effort was made to examine their implications in the context of this study. Some examples are the "can do" attitude in the Army, the absence of training scenarios which pose realistic battlefield possibilities that will train troops to manage the stress of "defeat" and develop recovery tactics, the fear of looking bad, and of not doing it right the first time--fear of making a mistake.

While the foregoing are important symptoms, the emphasis in this analysis is upon components of the system which are amenable to more rapid operational improvement.

The following general observations are presented.

• Most commanders apparently view the ARTEP as a test which impacts directly on their OER. Introduction of any factor, as an OPFOR maneuver unit correctly employed, will disrupt the flow of the traditional scenario and threaten to make the US unit (and its commander) "look bad."

A way to overcome this impediment might be to require as part of the ARTEP scenarios in which US units are expected to be faced with great adversity, confusion, and something approaching a realistic battlefield condition. In view of the anxieties surrounding the ARTEP due to its test-like nature, a change in the formating to require the US units involved in the evaluation to be able to successfully manage a "defeat" which is inflicted by an OPFOR unit as part of the training exercise would help force the fear of "looking bad" out of the event. In this case, a unit would look bad only if it were unable to show promise of coping with conditions commensurate with loss. This portion of the ARTEP's external evaluation might occupy one of the three to five days usually allotted for the entire exercise.

Underscoring the interest in greater realism to test unit readiness was the recent statement by General William E. DePuy (Rtd) that "a real measure of a unit's effectiveness would be to administer all four qualifications tests or inspections (SQT, ARTEP, AGI, and CMI) within the shortest possible time--say two weeks--for success on the battlefield requires all individual and unit skills to be exerted simultaneously."[12] He goes on to say, "It would not be surprising in this method of testing to find performance down by 50% or more across the board." It might well be that the performance would be nearer zero than 50%, a very

---

[12]DePuy, William E. "The US Army, Are We Ready for the Future," Army, September, 1978, p. 25.

probable outcome given the anxieties related to promotion now rampant in the system.

• Non-training related activities consume a significantly large part of the time units have available. Therefore, when training does take place it is often focused only on "passage of tests" to the detriment of other aspects of unit and leadership training. No change seems possible in this area until priorities at the highest level are established consistent with policy statements about training and readiness and, most important, supported down the entire chain of command.

• The presentation of instruction about the OPFOR is viewed as an added requirement by most units resulting in the program receiving attention only when it can fill a training schedule vacancy or an inspection need. Hence, bridging the gap between the classroom type presentation and integration of the information into tactical training on a regular basis, remains a major task.

• Absent from the present picture of the OPFOR program is a clear statement of its training objectives and the procedures by which they can be achieved. For example, given the probable set of conditions inherent in some of the tactics employed by the Soviets, e.g., speed, force ratio, and obscuration of the battlefield by smoke, EW, and deception, what are the minimum training requirements necessary to prepare our troops to manage these conditions? How can they be achieved given the present temporal, financial, and space constraints most units seem to have? The next stage of this research will confront these and similar questions.